

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace Paragraph [0013] of the specification by the following paragraph:

[0013] FIG. 1 is a block diagram generally showing an image processing system that can be programmed in accordance with one of the embodiments of the present invention.

Please replace Paragraph [0021] of the specification by the following paragraph:

[0021] The image processor 18 receives the pre-processed images 16, performs image processing on those images, and outputs the processed images 22 to the post-processor 24. The post-processor 24 is programmed to merge a processed image from image processor 18 with a corresponding pre-processed image from the pre-processor 14, as will be explained in more detail below. The post-processor ~~[[14]]~~ 24 may comprise a dedicated processor or a separate processing module or computer program of the same general-purpose computer that includes the pre-processor 14 and image processor 18.

Please replace Paragraph [0027] of the specification by the following paragraph:

[0027] In the post-processor 24, the processed grayscale image 22 (comprising the processed image regions) is merged, e.g., by summation of respective pixel intensity values, with the second masked image (comprising the original annotation regions) in step 34. The result 36 is the processed image ~~[[36]]~~ with all annotations intact. The merged annotations occupy the same pixels in the merged image that the removed annotations originally occupied in the annotated image.